

Real World Readers Reflection

Participating in the FA Collaboration/Real World Readers project was an excellent, authentic experience for me as a pre-service teacher. I got to see how unpredictable students could be along with how incredibly creative they are. I worked with three students, and they were rarely ever in the same place with their work progress. However, each had some amazing contributions to offer to the poetry unit. I enjoyed reading their original work, and they even uploaded their own *Poetry Out Loud* recitations for me to hear. The ones that I heard were excellent. Poetry not being my strong suit, I was a little worried about guiding these students through various poetry-heavy activities. However, I knew that I would be teaching these concepts one day. I needed the practice. I found myself reaching to find perspective and ideas that would allow these students to succeed in their classes. It was a great feeling when I logged onto their site, and found comments thanking me for the guidance that I had provided. It's experiences like this that allow me to know that I am working towards the right profession.

Some take-aways that I have derived from this project are the importance of an authentic audience for students and the *Poetry Out Loud* website. From my experience as a student and working with students, I know how important it is to be able to discuss concepts with someone that knows what the concepts are about. It is as simple as being able to relate with someone. The same thing still happens for professional communities; that's why we have conferences like VATE and NCTE. I want to strive to provide my students with an authentic collaboration experience, because it will keep them engaged in the material and improve their collaboration skills. If I can set up a collaboration with more experienced individuals, like this one was, then students will be more invested, because they know these people know what they are doing. Who would turn down advice from an expert? Much like this collaboration, I believe students will enjoy the *Poetry Out Loud* website when I'm teaching a poetry unit. This website offers all types of help, and it does a great job with differentiation. There are visual and auditory recitations along with tons of poems to read, both classic and modern. Students are bound to find something they are interested in on this site.

I found this project enriching, because it benefitted both the students and their mentors. I felt that, though I was mentoring the students on poetry, the students were mentoring me on how to be a good teacher. There is no comparison to that of an authentic audience. In my experience, I have found that when you put a student up against a research text, scholarly article, or graduate school course when it comes to providing the right resources for teachers, the student wins every time.